



City of Seattle
Office of the Mayor

University District Town Hall recap
Tuesday, January 25th, 2011
[University Heights Center](#)
5031 University Way NE
206-527-4278

Jimmy Nixon, the founder/director of [Broadway Bound Children's Theater](#) gives an introduction (the group has been at [University Heights Center](#) for 9 years)

- The young cast of [Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory](#) start the evening off by performing three numbers from the upcoming musical. [Tickets are available for purchase [here](#) for performances February 4th-13th].

Patty Whisler, emcee:

- It's great to be here after having bought the building from the school district last year
- It's great to have the Mayor here, especially with his community council/neighborhood planning background
- "He knows what it takes to go through and purchase and run a building like this," and he knows that you have to put aside desires for immediate gratification or even eventual gratification, but you make a lot of friends along the way when you're doing something important for the community, and the feeling you get when the City decides to help out, and when you're part of something that makes your community more alive, is a wonderful feeling

Mayor:

- We want to leave plenty of time for Q&A, which is the best part of community meetings
- I appreciate the comment about the strength of community
- Beth Pflug, the [Neighborhood District Coordinator](#) for his neighborhood of Greenwood, retired recently, and community members put on a retirement party for her
 - Community members putting on a retirement party for a City employee is a pretty amazing thing
 - I got to reconnect with a lot of folks from my neighborhood days
 - The desire to have the place where you live be a high-quality place is a strong shared value
 - We've gone through difficult economic times recently
 - We're closing the Service Center in Greenwood & reducing the number of Centers that we have open, along with lots of other reductions (community center hours, maintenance in certain areas, pulling back on re-paving city streets)
 - We looked for efficiencies in City government and found them, even though some were painful for communities
 - There were lots of cuts, unions took cost of living hits, all employees not subject to union contracts received no cost of living increase
 - Some fees did increase (community centers, parking, etc), but the goal was to sustain direct services and respect the highest priorities of citizens
 - There were no general business or property tax increase, but we passed a vehicle license fee with Council to take care of our roads
 - Moving forward, we have a [budget](#) that takes the recession into account for the next two years

- Two years from that there will probably be further cuts that will be necessary, but the City is in a better place than the County and the State
 - "We only have money because the public has money," and we have to respect that
 - There will probably be adjustments over the next two years to restore lost services or fund new initiatives that we care about
- Current Mayor's Office initiatives:
 1. The [Youth and Families Initiative](#)
 - It was launched at the beginning of the administration last year, and it's focused on working with the community to identify the most significant problems facing youth and mobilizing the community around solutions.
 - We held a number of town halls and outreach sessions, which led to a Kids and Families Congress where we identified 37 specific priorities
 - We're putting action teams to work on them
 - We've begun a partnership with the UW, the school district, foundation leaders, and other leaders to discuss how we can collaborate our resources around common objectives
 - For example, we know that if children can read at grade level by the third grade, they're likely to graduate from high school, and if they can't then they're likely to drop out
 - You can help—there's a sign-up sheet outside for an [early reading program](#) that we're helping to recruit people for from the Mayor's Office
 - We're also working towards a renewal of the [Families & Education Levy](#) for later this year
 - It's a renewal of the prior levy, and it helps fund things that the school district doesn't have the resources for, that help raise achievement levels
 - All of us are going to depend on the success of our youth
 - As part of living in a city today, we share a common destiny, and we'll have a better destiny if we give our children the opportunity to succeed
 2. The [Seattle Jobs Plan](#)
 - It focuses on a number of things:
 - Green job development and energy efficiency; we have a \$20 million grant from the federal government that we're going to leverage into \$140 million in energy efficiency work
 - Job training for young people to connect them to opportunities and apprenticeships
 - Business district outreach program (a grant program) that's received a lot of grant applications from local businesses
 - Working with specific sectors of the economy to find out what they need
 - In the past when times were good we were trying to figure out how to protect ourselves from the negative effects of growth
 - Now we're looking for changes we can make that will make it easier for people to live their lives and for entrepreneurs (parking around light rail stations, relaxing rules about home occupations (what types of business you can run out of your house), etc
 3. [Walk Bike Ride](#):
 - We've launched a Transit Master Plan process in response to the fact that more and more people want to be able to ride transit, ride their bicycles, or walk, but we're not well-funded in that regard
 - We're also planning for how to finance the next generation of transportation infrastructure that the city needs as well as taking care of our existing assets, which is also a problem
 4. [Engage Seattle](#):
 - We have a program called Engage Seattle
 - We don't have the financial resources we once had; we're in a different era, and we have to look at the resources we have and use them as wisely as possible
 - One of the resources I believe we have is this community; people in this city have shown over and over again that they care about their communities and they want to pitch in
 - We should be able to give you concrete opportunities to help make your neighborhood a better place

- We're calling that Engage Seattle, but we hope it's an attitude in City government as well
- We have to figure out how to leverage community resources with government resources to get the best possible results
- It can reveal itself in many different ways, but we're counting on the community to help us

Patty Whisler introduces the panel:

Officer Kip Strong from the [Seattle Police Department](#) (SPD)

Christopher Williams, acting Superintendent of the [Parks Department](#)

Steve Johnson, Director of the [Office of Economic Development](#) (OED)

Terri Kimball from the [Human Services Department](#)

Mike Terrell from the [Department of Transportation](#) (SDOT)

Diane Sugimura, Director of the [Department of Planning and Development](#)

Karen Ko from the [Department of Neighborhoods](#)

- Guidelines: the Mayor has to be out by 8:00, 20 people are signed up to ask questions
- Please keep your questions short, and the Mayor will try to do the same
- Question #1?

1.Speaker: What are we doing about employing youth like myself around Seattle, and how can they find jobs in the city, especially green jobs? Do you have outreach programs to colleges and high schools for recent graduates?

Mayor:

- We're looking at ways to use existing funding to employ more people locally.
 - [Community Power Works](#) is a partnership we're engaged in that utilizes energy efficiency grants from the federal government
 - We have lots of [internships](#) in the City, but they're not always connected to real-world opportunities; OED is inventorying all youth internship opportunities to see how we can make all of them known to the public and ensure that interns are getting experience that leads them to good job opportunities

Steve Johnson:

- I spoke to the speaker before the forum and told him about trainings for youth who are out of high school [the [Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council](#) has some good ones [here](#), and the [Seattle Jobs Initiative](#) just published a good handbook of opportunities [here](#)]
- It's important to think about where you want to get; the Office of Economic Development can help if you know what you want

2. Lori Hemingway, a resident of Ravenna and a parent of a student at Roosevelt HS and a member of the [Roosevelt PTA](#):

- Not asking a question, just making a statement about light rail development in downtown Ravenna
- The [Roosevelt Neighborhood Association](#) and [Roosevelt Development Group](#) are the two groups working on the issue
 - RNA proposes the highest density around the light rail stop, tapering down to the single-family houses at 15th & 65th
 - I submitted a video showing how busy the intersection by the school is; the RNA plan has the development going away from the high school, the RDG involves putting a grocery store at the intersection by the high school
 - Imagine the deliveries adding to the foot and vehicle traffic by the high school—the owner of the property is looking for as much profit as he can get, we shouldn't reward him for it
 - Roosevelt PTA supports the RNA suggestion because it's better for students at Roosevelt High School

Mayor: [to Diane] What's the status of the Roosevelt rezoning process right now?

Diane Sugimura:

- DPD will be sending a recommendation to Council within a month
- We've had several meetings
 - There are still several issues relating to the change from single- to multi-family zoning
 - There are also incentive zoning issues related to trying to get more back for the community
 - Current zoning doesn't allow for everything that the community asked for, and we're looking into that
- The Roosevelt Development Group is on hold currently

3. Speaker: Another statement:

- I started bicycling to work a year ago, and I want to encourage the Mayor to keep up the good work regarding improving bicycling infrastructure
- Just today I saw a father with two children on bikes, and I want to tell the Mayor to keep pushing forward to encourage more widespread bicycling

4. Jim O'Halloran, currently the chair of the land use committee of the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association, also a question about light rail development:

- As background info, in 2004 and 2005 my & surrounding communities worked with Sound Transit to negotiate a light rail stop in the heart of our neighborhood
- We participated in neighborhood planning shortly thereafter and issued a very detailed neighborhood plan to the City
- Most density is set to happen where it's currently zoned for, but there's a bit of a "gold rush" happening currently where different groups (business, "enviros") want to rush to up-zone more aggressively than the current plan calls for
- Will you help us resist the simplistic plans that some are now putting forward in contrast to the neighborhood plan?

Mayor:

- I support neighborhood planning, but it exists in a broader context
- That context is partly legal, including laws voted in by the people (e.g., the [Growth Management Act](#), which filters down to the City's [Comprehensive Plan](#) and [neighborhood plans](#) underneath that)
- The question is, what are the overall problems that we're trying to address?
 - Seattleites think locally and globally very well; they also need access to good housing
 - We have to sit down with communities and find out what the goals are that they're trying to achieve
 - I've read most of the existing neighborhood plans [editor's note: to read them yourself, go [here](#) and look in the lower-right hand corner of the screen], and the common goals are walkable environments, good transit connections, thriving local business districts, and accessibility for people from all income levels
 - If those are our guiding principles, that's what matters—good design, streetscapes, public spaces, etc
 - You can find places that are more dense that we don't like because they don't have those things, and places that are less dense that we like because they do have those things
 - We need to look at solutions that meet all our needs and call upon neighbors to find good solutions...but if we don't provide affordable housing opportunities, we're eventually going to price everyone out

5. Speaker: I would like to direct your attention to the [520 project](#):

- When it's done, the state will have taken out the RH Thompson ramps to nowhere and the Arboretum ramps and restored the lagoon
- What steps are you taking to ensure that once construction is finished the City will get that space?

Mayor:

- I have a lot of misgivings about the current design of the 520 project
 - We're basically taking a 4-lane highway that empties into the Montlake cut and the I-5/520 intersection and adding more lanes
 - But the problem can't be solved by adding more cars; we should propose replacing 4 lanes for cars and adding 2 lanes for high-capacity transit and eventually light rail.
 - The prevailing political winds today are to build a 6-lane highway and think about traffic mitigation later, but there's only enough money now to build a 6-lane bridge until they get to our side of the bridge; we're still a couple of billion dollars short
 - There are a couple of things we're not being smart about:
 - We don't have enough money to build the bridge
 - Building a bigger bridge to dump more traffic into one of our city's worst choke points isn't a smart way to go
- Re: the Arboretum, that type of thinking helps us reduce the impact of traffic in the Arboretum more than a 6-lane bridge

Speaker: But what are you doing to get the lagoon back if the ramps are removed?

Mayor: I apologize--I focused on what I wanted to talk about and now what you wanted to. [hands the mike to Christopher Williams]

Christopher Williams:

- We're working through a process of due diligence that ensures that if there is any taking of land involved, the City maximizes its ability to receive as much mitigation for the City as possible, and if possible to return some land back to the Arboretum

6. Speaker: A Ravenna resident, working with the Ravenna neighborhood re: their planning efforts for the neighborhood (leaving to go to the RNA meeting in 5 minutes)

- Roosevelt has been very forward-thinking in planning for more density recently
- We're not a locally-thinking area, we think globally
- How are you going to respect the existing neighborhood planning efforts?

Mayor:

- I love the neighborhood planning efforts, but I don't have a concrete answer yet
- Diane and her team will eventually present their plan to me for approval before they submit it to Council
- Diane and DPD take neighborhood input very seriously
- I'll see it and ask questions and bring my experience and values to that process and make a recommendation
- I do value neighborhood planning and participation, and I think Seattle residents are very forward-thinking
- There's no firm answer now, but there will be soon

8. Megan Gibbard, director of [Teen Feed](#) (serves homeless youth in the U District):

- I want to bring up the lack of a city-wide effort to end youth homelessness
 - There's no strong addressing of those issues in the [Ten-Year Plan to end Homelessness](#)
- Do you have a sense of what a plan would be city-wide?

Mayor:

- No, I don't, but I do think that we can get there and develop one, for two reasons:
 - The Ten-Year Plan is at a halfway point now (5 years)
 - There's a review process built in to determine how we're doing and what we need to do differently
 - I just hired a new [Human Services Department](#) Director, Dannette Smith, and I've tasked her with focusing on homelessness as well as the Youth and Families Initiative
 - She's very interested in surveying the work that we're already doing and seeing if there's a better way to use the resources we have at our disposal

Terri Kimball:

- I agree [with Megan]—there really does need to be a comprehensive plan for youth homelessness
- There aren't enough beds currently
- We're very concerned, and so is United Way
- It's time to develop a youth homelessness plan, and our department is very committed to that

9. Joseph Balachowski, a question about the tunnel:

- I understand that there's a glitch in the tunnel going under the old Federal Building.

Mayor:

- The tunnel is going through its environmental review right now
- Usually you do this before you begin a project, now we're doing it in reverse
- One of the issues is the Federal Building
- I'm not directly involved in the issue, but this is my understanding:
 - The tunnel boring machine will start going underground somewhere in Pioneer Square, and before it gets very deep it has to go through the fill on Western
 - With a 58-foot diameter boring machine, what will happen to the buildings above it?
 - Before you tunnel under a building you have to get rights to it; WSDOT can generally buy a building, but they can't do that with the Federal government, and the government is very hesitant to give it to them
 - It's their asset, and they're not very interested right now in allowing someone to go beneath it and cause it significant damage
- There are 19 buildings potentially at risk, including one, [619 Western](#), an artist's colony, that WSDOT is asking the residents to move out of
 - But it's not clear that WSDOT has followed existing [historic preservation guidelines](#)
 - That's the current status, I can't speak to how it will play out
 - It's obviously a matter of concern for those who care about historic preservation

10. Speaker: A northwest neighborhood plan steward, talking about the area north of [Kinnear Park](#) by Prospect Street [in Queen Anne]:

- There's a trail that will connect the two, but there's also a green belt that goes north to Howe and Blaine
- It would be possible to put in a trail all the way to Howe, and then another trail that could divide into a Y and go up to the top of the hill
 - It would be a great viewpoint, and part of the trail is already there
 - There are about 15 campers up there
 - 13 don't interfere with the trail, but 2 are dead center to where the trail would go
 - Prior to Elliott & 15th being there it was all tide flats
 - There used to be a road connecting Ballard to Belltown
- I would like a project status from the Parks department and maybe some support to do that.

Christopher Williams:

- Parks staff recently met with a woman heading up the [FOLK Park](#) plan, which received \$750,000 in funding from the Park and Green Spaces [Levy Opportunity Fund](#), and it's moving forward
- The City does have an encampment removal process, I'll connect with you afterwards so that we can activate that process here [editor's note: this was done the next morning, and the removal will take place according to the existing process]

12. Ginamarie Emanuel: I was born here, and I'm still here

- Yes, we need a comprehensive plan for youth homelessness
- I'm a neighbor at large, the only person doing community outreach for street youth in the U District except for one hour per week that a van comes
- I have a different perspective from having been here my whole life
- One major problem for what's currently available for street youth is that it's all top down, not self-managed

- Many street youth don't want to be in an institutionalized setting, and any plan has to include youth themselves
- They're not here now because the one meal per day available to them is being served right now
- There's an entity called the "Ave Family"
 - There's evidence that it's existed since 1935
 - It's the bohemians, artists, street youth, intellectuals, etc. that made up the core character of the neighborhood when I was born
 - That character is being stolen from us piece by piece--I feel like I lived in a beautiful village, and a corporation came and wiped it out and put up a rubber tree, and I cry about it
 - We would raise street kids, in our homes and in the parks
 - We would make sure that they didn't experience prostitution and hard drugs
 - It's getting harder and harder to do that, because we can't, for example, use a condemned building and make it into shelter that they own
 - The Ave Family is a real community; we meet on a regular basis (introduces two former street youth who are here tonight)
 - It's a real family; we're real people, we live here underneath everything else that's going on
 - There's no effort or attempt to acknowledge that that's really the heart of the neighborhood
- I want to see people owning the services that are provided to them

Mayor:

- I think it is important in the work that we do to give a sense of ownership to the people who are involved; it's one of the reasons that the encampments are as popular as they are
- I place a large emphasis of listening to people, and I think it's a characteristic that I share with our new Human Services Director
- It's important to listen as we try to solve these problems

14. Speaker: I live at 41st and Brooklyn

- I really like what you're saying about collaboration
- We currently have 5 construction sites going on there right now
- I've had a great opportunity to work with Jessica Murphy at SDOT about pedestrian safety
- UW and the contractors have been really receptive to talking about the issue
- If any of your folks have any ways to contribute to pedestrian safety, we really want everyone to stay safe; any ideas on how to contribute to the safety of the community would be very helpful

Mayor: so it's your perception that it's less safe for pedestrians due to the construction that's going on?

Speaker: Yes; there are phases where there are lots of dump trucks, lots of concrete trucks, etc...I'm going to make a flier and hand it out at four-way stops

Mayor:

- We got some grief for doing a pedestrian safety campaign downtown last year
- The middle of winter is a very unsafe time for pedestrians because of the weather
 - We handed out colorful umbrellas to highlight the importance of being alert, and we got some grief about spending money on umbrellas, which I can understand because times are tough
 - One thing that came out of our pedestrian master plan process was the importance of not only the physical spaces in construction zones, but also the policies involved and the educational elements as well, and appropriate enforcement
 - Most pedestrian-driver accidents tend to be drivers not realizing that someone is in the crosswalk, but we hand out twice as many jaywalking tickets than we do tickets to drivers, because it's easier to give jaywalking tickets
 - We're looking at ways to change that, and we're seeing some effects, including a reduction in the number of pedestrian accidents in the city

15. Mark Weed: I've lived in the neighborhood since 1965, and have also lived in New York and Boston; I'm also part owner of a cattle ranch in Spanaway that's encroached upon by people who are being pushed out of places like this

- The Mayor knows that I've also been active in the 520 and Alaskan Way effort over time
- I think what's good for a person like me and an audience like this is that I have the ability to get an idea of what people are thinking
- Density is really important, because I see the difference between this neighborhood and my ranch, and I choose to live here
- As it relates to the transportation networks that we're talking about, it's important to note that there's a lot more common ground than there is disagreement
- I appreciate the Mayor for providing his candid insights, even though not everyone supports them, and I'm encouraged by what's going on tonight

Mayor:

- I appreciate the statement; I know you've been very active in the University District
- When I was in graduate school I sat on [CUCAC](#)
 - They wanted to convert the Commodore Duchess to office buildings, and I appealed that ruling
- Even if we disagree, we can still have a good dialogue

16. Kate Becker, the director of development at [Seattle Theater Group](#)

- We're the owners of the Paramount Theater and the Moore Theater, and we've recently taken the Neptune Theater under our wing
- We'll be opening in mid-May, but in the mean time we're doing a lot of fundraising to transform it from a movie theater to a theater venue
- The County's [4 Culture](#) arts funding is the largest source of arts funding in the City
 - What are your plans for getting more funding for 4 Culture?

Mayor:

- Thank you for taking on the Neptune
- I thought you were going to ask about Sound Transit and the potential impacts on the building, and we're working with them
- I support restoring support for 4 Culture
 - The source of funding that's expiring is controversial
 - Everyone agrees that part of it should go to 4 Culture, but there's a question where the other part of it should go
 - Can I influence it? Our staff is working on it, we're doing what we can to preserve arts funding, but time will tell if we're successful there are a lot of other political forces at play trying to steer it in their direction, and arts funding has occasionally been a casualty

17. Mark Griffin, president of the Roosevelt Neighbors Alliance

- Comment: I want to voice strong support for [bike patrols](#)
 - We're a very diverse neighborhoods, with students, youth, and single-family residents
 - Anything that we can do to reinforce that and bring in more police officers on bikes would be greatly appreciated
- Question: I was hoping to get an update on Jiggles

Mayor:

- We've worked to get more officers on patrol into the force and give them more proactive time rather than reactive time
 - Ideally 30% proactive time
 - A good rule of thumb for anyone, myself included
 - Not sure of the current status of bike patrols in the U District

Officer Kip Strong:

- The level is fairly static...I was a bike patrol officer, and I loved it

Speaker: We get a lot of complaints from people who live in the community—there are a lot of people who don't live in the neighborhood who come in and cause disturbances, damage, etc.

Mayor:

- The police presence does make a big difference, and the perception of safety becomes self-enforcing
- Re: Jiggles, I believe action is forthcoming

Diane Sugimura:

- This is an important issue for the City
- We sent our inspectors out this past weekend and sent our findings to the Law department

Mayor: We're almost out of time; we'll do a lightning round for the last 4 questions:

18. Josh LaBelle, lives in the Montlake neighborhood and runs Seattle Theater Group

- I would like to make a request to keep in mind the importance of arts as an economic engine throughout our city and our community

Mayor: It is an engine, and we will keep it in mind

Steve Johnson: OED has been talking to STG and is possibly looking at helping to finance them

19. Speaker: Has there been any progress on municipal broadband?

Mayor: Yes--we've put together a working group...and when we say broadband, we mean fiber optic; it's the infrastructure of the future. We're working internally to develop a business plan, but we're a little bit away from being able to roll it out and seek financing.

20. Speaker: Will there be a community meeting for Seattle Public Schools and the University of Washington to address education issues? There are other options; the State should come up with an income tax to fund education.

Mayor: I supported the income tax proposal; I'm not sure when we'll see one again. As part of the Youth and Families Initiative, I put together a group with education leaders including UW and SPS to see how we can better collaborate.

21. Scott:

- I live in the U District, and it's gone from a vibrant community to a threatening community
- I feel it's predominated by a drug culture on the Ave
- What are you doing to return it to a place where families want to be and people want to shop?

Officer Kip Strong:

- The community police team lead for this area had to go to two other meetings tonight, otherwise he would have been here
- He said that one of the biggest things they're working on now is drug problems in this area; it's receiving a lot of attention
- I'm not a decision-maker, I'm a foot soldier, but we are aware of it, and it is being addressed
- The north precinct is the biggest in the city in terms of population and size both
- We know it's happening, and we are trying to address it

Mayor:

- I've learned more about this issue (open-air drug dealing), and it's something that a lot of people in different parts of the city are concerned about; it makes a neighborhood feel unsafe
- We're not the only city that struggles with this
 - Enforcement and incarceration has been tried and found wanting
 - We've experimented with the drug market initiative to talk to youth
 - We're also looking at a grant to divert low-level offenders to prevent recurrence
 - This problem is widespread, and we're searching for ways to lead
 - Having a good police presence is also very important to provide a sense of safety and reassurance

22. Speaker:

- You're probably the best Mayor the city's ever had

- What are your plans for alternative energy in case something happens such as an earthquakes or a [false flag](#) event?
- What are your thoughts about alternative energy so that we have something to "put in the file system" so that it's there?

Mayor:

- This is something I care a lot about
- It won't be one large solution so much as a number of smaller solutions
- The largest gain will be in energy efficiency; a caulk gun is a pretty good idea
- We need to build a system where you can understand where heat losses are in your house and do energy audits
 - That's the Community Power Works program that we're starting in south Seattle
- We're also working to get energy audits on file with DPD
- The other major source of energy use aside from buildings is transportation
 - We can think of efficiency as being a vehicle with better gas mileage, but it's also being able to walk to your grocery store, or being able to take the bus or light rail instead
 - [Seattle City Light](#) is also supporting charging infrastructure for electric vehicles
- We need to build communities where it's an attractive choice to be able to walk to your local store, or take transit to get around
- We need to prepare for the energy needs of the future

23. My name is Amy Bryant, with [Sustainable Seattle](#)—you can go online and take our [Seattle Area Happiness Initiative survey](#), which is based around making the city a better place

Mayor: A good note to end on.